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(INSTALLATIONS, ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT)**

Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies

**“The 2019 National Emergency Declaration to Build a Border Wall & its Effect on
Military Construction and Readiness”**

Chairwoman Wasserman Schultz, Ranking Member Carter, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify on the Readiness of our Installations with respect to our military construction program and the president’s declaration of a national emergency on the southern border.

On February 15, 2019, the president issued Proclamation 9844, declaring a national emergency on the southern border. In that document he invoked U.S. Code Title 10, section 2808(a) (Military Construction (MILCON)), which authorizes the Secretary of Defense to determine whether border barriers are necessary to support the use of the armed forces and to re-direct unobligated DOD MILCON funding to construct border barriers if required.

At present, the Acting Secretary of Defense is considering whether and how to use this authority. On February 18th, he requested from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) a prioritized list of proposed border construction projects that would support the use of the armed forces in its efforts to assist Customs and Border Protection in securing the southern border. DHS has not yet responded, and, importantly, the Acting Secretary of Defense has not yet made any decisions with respect to using section 2808 authority.

No matter what actions are taken using the emergency authority, the Army’s number one priority continues to be Readiness, which is completely aligned with the Secretary of Defense and Secretary of the Army’s efforts to build and sustain warfighting capabilities. This priority is also consistent with National Defense Strategy

objectives. As power projection platforms, installations remain foundational Readiness concerns for all core Army missions, and we will continue to diligently and prudently carry out our goals of modernizing facilities and ensuring energy and water resilience, all while being good stewards of environmental resources.

The Army also is keenly aware of the obligation to provide safe, affordable housing to all men and women in uniform. The lethality of our forces begin in the home, where the safety of Soldiers and their families promotes peace of mind and mission focus. Wherever our men and women are, whether deployed or garrisoned, we work every day to ensure Soldiers know their loved ones are safe. Because high-quality housing is a Readiness concern essential to our mission, I want to stress the Department will not consider any family housing or barracks projects as funding sources for section 2808. The care of our Soldiers and their families will always be of the utmost importance and will remain a priority.

Whatever decision is made, I will take the utmost care that we meet our goal of Readiness and will work with my peers to ensure the Army effectively carries out potential commitments while maintaining adequate resources for other mission objectives. As this process develops, I will carry out prescribed actions, while also serving as an advocate for our Soldiers and our mission.

I look forward to answering any questions you may have.